

July 1998

“Empower Your Cooperative”

Environmental Compliance Guide for Rural Electric Cooperatives

What are rural electric cooperatives?

Rural electric cooperatives are consumer-owned utilities established to provide at-cost electric service in predominantly rural areas. Most are distribution systems that deliver electricity to residential and other consumers, while a small percentage of them both generate and transmit (G&T) electricity.

What is the purpose of the guide?

The purpose is to help rural electric cooperatives better understand their obligations under the federal environmental regulations, and to improve their level of compliance. It's focused on the smaller distribution co-ops, since the larger distribution and the G&T co-ops typically have the resources to employ environmental compliance professionals. However, the information in the guide applies to all rural electric cooperatives.

What is the scope/content of the guide?

The guide explains how to comply with the federal environmental regulations applicable to the non-power generation activities at the cooperatives (e.g., PCB-contaminated equipment repair). State and local regulations are not covered, although information is provided on when those regulations may apply. The guide covers thirteen specific environmental topics: PCB's; waste management; hazardous waste/material transport; storage tanks; hazardous products management; spills/releases; wastewater/stormwater; drinking water; wetlands and endangered species; herbicides/pesticides; air; and asbestos. Information is also provided on some pollution prevention options that are available, and where additional help can be obtained.

Who are potential users of the guide?

The primary users of the guide are intended to be maintenance and other staff of rural electric cooperatives that are responsible for, or assist in, environmental compliance. The guide is written in “plain English,” with an easy-to-read format and style. Other potential users are local, state, and federal government environmental professionals, particularly compliance inspectors.

Who developed the guide?

The guide was developed jointly by EPA's Office of Compliance and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Where is the guide available?

An electronic version of the guide is available for downloading from the World Wide Web on the Internet, at the following address: “<http://es.epa.gov/oeca/metd/empower>” Also, complimentary copies are available to certain groups (such as public and academic libraries; federal, state, and local governments; and the media) from EPA's National Center for Environmental Publications and Information at (800) 490-9198. Ask for the following document number: “305/B/97/007”